United Nations E/CN.3/2004/25

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 December 2003

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Thirty-fifth session
2-5 March 2004
Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda*
Activities not classified by field: statistical capacity-building

Report of the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21)

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission a progress report prepared by the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21). The report provides the Commission with a summary of the results of its independent evaluation as well as the outputs achieved from advocacy work, information-sharing, task team activities, and subregional/country workshops undertaken in calendar year 2003.

2. The Commission may wish:

(a) To note the progress of PARIS 21 to date;

(b) To comment on its future direction and forward programme for 2004-2006.

* E/CN.3/2004/1.

03-65170 (E) 060104

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I. Background

1. Despite national and international efforts to finance statistics over recent years, a majority of developing countries do not have systems that are capable of providing policy makers, the general public, and economic and social partners with the statistical data that they need in order to take sound policy, business, political and personal decisions. Typically, demand for statistics is weak — symptomatic of an embryonic statistical culture. National statistical systems are not demand-driven and are characterized by poor coordination among the different bodies producing statistics, by meagre national financing, and by the fact that vital international support is too often ad hoc or not attuned to the constraints imposed by the country's individual needs. The international community is, however, at a turning point in the history of statistical development. For the first time, statistical demand in countries is made explicit in their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Statistics are necessary for the definition, the implementation and the evaluation of poverty reduction policies. On the international level, the Millennium Development Goals and their indicators provide a framework for statistical demand agreed by all countries. Increasing the capacity of systems to monitor the Goals will need to be considered one of the costs of their achievement. Statistical development has also been discussed at large international meetings, such as the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002.

2. In light of this situation, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21) was launched at a meeting in Paris in November 1999 in response to an Economic and Social Council resolution on rationalizing and improving statistics and indicators. The founding institutions of the initiative are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the European Commission. The first annual progress report of PARIS 21 was presented to the Statistical Commission on 8 March 2001 (see E/CN.3/2001/24).[1]

II. Work programme for 2003

A. Advocacy

3. Following the success of the English-language film entitled "Measuring the Change in World Poverty" which was developed by PARIS 21 in 2002, the PARIS 21 secretariat has begun compiling an archive of filmed interviews and presentations at each of its regional workshops. In addition, PARIS 21 has updated the "Why Statistics?" advocacy web site (www.paris21.org/htm/task/advocacy/homepage.html), which offers information on setting national statistical system priorities, data quality, and financing statistical activities.

B. Partnership and information exchange

Newsletter

4. The PARIS 21 newsletter is a means to report on international statistical activities and serves as a forum for dialogue among PARIS 21 consortium members and beyond. Features include articles advocating for the use of statistics in policy

decisions and reports on workshops and statistical activities. Two issues were produced and disseminated in 2003, one in March and one in December.

C. Task teams

5. PARIS 21 task teams bring together, under a volunteer convener, professionals interested in particular aspects of statistical capacity-building. Task team members include experts from international organizations, donor agencies, and developing and transition countries. The census task team — in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Statistics South Africa, the United States Bureau of the Census, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Department for International Development — organized an International Expert Group Seminar on Population Census Data Dissemination and Use in November 2003, in Pretoria. The rural and agricultural statistics task team prepared an interim regional project proposal for "Strengthening agricultural statistics for poverty reduction and food security in rural Africa", which was approved by the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building in May 2003. The work programme for the improving statistical support for monitoring development goals task team included a set of country case studies undertaken to review country capacity, and an international study. At the Inter-agency and Expert Meeting on Millennium Development Goals Indicators held in Geneva in November 2003, the work plans of the country study teams were presented and reviewed by participants. For the international study, the team distributed a questionnaire to United Nations bodies with Millennium Development Goals indicators-related responsibilities, for the purpose of asking for changes and updates, collecting information on data-collection and data quality assurance/control processes, and obtaining information about plans for improvement. The team has also drafted terms of reference for a study aimed at reviewing the internationally sponsored household survey programme, particularly in relation to obtaining key indicator information.

D. Regional workshops

6. Regional workshops are the start of a process for improving the policy relevance of statistics by developing the dialogue between the key users of the statistical system and the managers of statistical production in developing and transition countries. Not only have these offered opportunities to network with and learn from neighbouring countries and the international community, but the partnerships with users and decision makers that are forged at the workshops lead to country-owned action plans which most country teams have continued to develop after the workshop is over. Typically, plans include actions for better use of data; promoting statistics; improving relations with the media, policy makers and users; developing dissemination and communications policies; conducting national stakeholders' workshops; investigating best practices in the region; and embarking on strategic statistical planning activities.

7. Since the last report to the Statistical Commission, PARIS 21 has held five regional workshops: (a) Central Africa Regional Workshop, December 2002, Yaoundé; (b) West Africa Regional Workshop I, January 2003, Dakar; (c) West Africa Regional Workshop II, March 2003, Abuja; (d) Central America Regional

Workshop, May 2003, San Salvador; and (e) Regional Forum for the Arab States, September 2003, Amman.

III. Evaluation

8. The PARIS 21 consortium has now been operating for three years. The initiative was independently evaluated by Oxford Policy Management, Ltd., in early 2003. The evaluators interviewed stakeholders in the North and South to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative, reported on the lessons learned and proposed an updated strategy for the work of the initiative beyond 2003. The evaluation found that the PARIS 21 multi-agency task teams and regional workshop programme "had lasting effects in strengthening interactions with statisticians and policy makers" and that "these efforts have helped countries to respond to the needs for data" in connection with monitoring and developing policies for poverty reduction strategies and the Millennium Development Goals. The evaluation concluded that, in light of the promise the initiative had shown over the previous three years and the scale of the challenges ahead in improving the response of developing countries to growing data needs, PARIS 21 should continue for an additional three years. The PARIS 21 Steering Committee authorized this extension on 1 July 2003. The evaluation report can be viewed online at www.paris21.org/htm/workshop/sc0703/eval_final.pdf.

IV. Forward work programme (2004-2006)

9. In October 2003, the PARIS 21 Steering Committee reviewed and approved a work programme for the period from 2004 to 2006. The complete programme can be viewed online at www.paris21.org/htm/workshop/sc1003/P21_workprogramme.pdf. The success of the forward work programme will be measured along several axes. The initiative must show a demonstrable increase in the political and financial support for evidence-based policy-making and policy-relevant statistics. Poverty reduction and development policies must be evidence-based, and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers must include strategies for the development of the national statistical system.

A. National statistics development strategies

10. For 2004-2006 period, PARIS 21 will focus its efforts on encouraging all developing countries to establish a national statistics development strategy by mid-2006 and by 2010 to have naturally owned and produced data for all Millennium Development Goals indicators. Countries need to have an overall vision of the development of their national statistical system that will include national, regional and international needs; be part of the country development and poverty reduction policy; serve as a framework for international and bilateral assistance; include all parts of the data production units and address the issues related to the analysis and use of data; follow international standards including quality; and build on all past and existing activities and experiences. The five national statistics development strategy phases are: launching, road map, diagnosis and vision, strategies, and annual action plans. Each phase will be considered completed when its proposals

have received the formal approval of the appropriate authorities. The establishment of national statistics development strategy is by necessity a consultative process.

B. Advocacy

11. Based on interviews conducted at recent events, an advocacy film conveying a universal message on the importance of statistics will be produced at the end of 2004. Preparations are also under way to produce French-, Spanish- and Arabic-language films, focusing on the issues specific to the regions concerned.

C. Partnership and information exchange

Web site

12. PARIS 21 makes extensive use of its web site (www.paris21.org) as a communication and publicity tool. The site provides access to presentations and reports from workshops, task team outputs, details on upcoming meetings, and links to other relevant statistical sites. The site will be thoroughly redesigned in 2004 to include new features and an improved navigation and structure.

D. Task teams

1. Tools and methods

13. The tools and methods task team will develop and document tools related to the statistics needed for monitoring development policy. The first proposal under this team is entitled "Methods and tools for assessing governance through reporting and analysis" (METAGORA). The two-year pilot project METAGORA, which is expected to begin operations in early 2004, aims in particular at:

- Developing methods and producing pilot tools that will help obtain data and indicators on the basis of which beneficiaries can formulate or evaluate policies promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance.
- Identifying and assessing current work and initiatives undertaken in the North and the South with a view to measuring progress in the fields of democracy, human rights and governance and developing indicators in these fields.
- Providing guidelines on methodologies for measuring democracy, human rights, and good governance, training materials and databases, as well as an online repository of project findings, relevant materials, and exemplary practices.
- Proposing conceptual and operational frameworks for progressive adoption and use of internationally agreed governance indicators.

2. Better use of multisectoral data, especially for decentralized governance and local accountability

14. In October 2003, the PARIS 21 Steering Committee approved the creation of a new task team on "Better use of multisectoral data, especially for decentralized governance and local accountability" (InterSect). The overall goal of the InterSect

team is to contribute to greater poverty reduction by increasing the availability and relevance of development data to underpin better policy-making and monitoring of progress across sectors. The team will aim to:

- Foster a multisectoral approach to poverty reduction by making data more accessible across sectors especially at the local level.
- identify areas in which the multisectoral approach is particularly appropriate and review obstacles and success factors critical to building a multisectoral evidence base.
- Work with a number of countries where innovative plans/strategies for enhancing the production and use of multisectoral data at local level are being pursued.
- Assess and develop tools that will facilitate the sharing of information across sectors.
- Assess training requirements for statisticians with respect to their working within a multisectoral environment, and for policy makers and decision makers with respect to their making better use of data and analysis.

E. Reporting

15. The need to report regularly on the use of statistics for development and poverty reduction and on the status and trends of the national statistical systems in developing and transition countries is now more acute than ever. PARIS 21 through the Partnership Library of Statistical System Documentation (PARLISTAT), the Statistical Capacity Building Indicators (SCBI) programme, and in general the regional programmes will report on the use of statistics in policy-making and the development of country statistical systems.

1. Partnership Library of Statistical System Documentation (PARLISTAT)

16. Many activities related to the development of national statistical systems are carried out by various partners, but the information and relevant documentation are inadequately disseminated. While the collaboration and coordination among donors are in some ways satisfactory at the headquarters level, there is no systematic tool to support the coordination at the country level. During the period from 2004 to 2006, PARIS 21 will collect and make available the existing information on the development of statistical systems by country through PARLISTAT. By serving as a repository of documentation on national statistical systems, PARLISTAT will facilitate the work of both the countries and the donors supporting them and serve as a tool for the national and international statistical systems. This information will be made available in the form of a dynamic online database on the PARIS 21 web site.

2. Statistical Capacity Building Indicators

17. The Statistical Capacity Building Indicators final report and questionnaire, approved by the PARIS 21 Steering Committee in October 2002, has been widely recognized as a useful monitoring mechanism. During the period 2004-2006, PARIS 21 will review, expand and update the questionnaire, taking into account various comments and new needs; roll out systematically the questionnaire in countries

using appropriate processes such as peer reviews, in liaison with other relevant institutions, and in the framework of national statistics development strategies; and use the Statistical Capacity Building Indicators to report annually on the status of statistical systems.

3. Report on the use of statistics and the status of national statistical systems

18. PARIS 21 will pilot a report on the use of statistics for development and on the status and trends of the national statistical systems in developing and transition countries. The objective is to report on the use of statistics in addressing development issues concerning, inter alia, the Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, governance, and the development of national and international statistical systems. The report will also highlight the evolution, constraints and best practices in statistical systems and will propose recommendations. The audience will be the key policy makers in the international community and in developing countries.

F. Regional workshops

19. During the period 2004-2006, regional workshops will help track progress with respect to national statistics development strategies, find solutions to the obstacles that countries may have encountered, and enable the more advanced countries to share their experiences of follow-up and development of national statistics development strategies with countries considering the possibility of taking similar steps. Regional workshops are planned for each region of the world before the end of 2006. These workshops will constitute a second round for regions such as Africa, the region comprising the Arab States and Latin America, and represent a first step for subregions in Asia and Europe.

V. Points for discussion

20. **The Statistical Commission is invited:**

(a) **To note the progress of PARIS 21 to date;**

(b) **To comment on its future direction and forward programme for 2004-2006.**

Notes

The documents submitted to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-second session are available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2001.htm.